

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE
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AFSC TESTIFIES FOR JAPANESE REDRESS

FOR RELEASE THURSDAY, JULY 16, 1981, AND THEREAFTER

WASHINGTON--There is no U.S. body of legal opinion or statutes to prevent the "disgraceful past action" of Japanese-American relocation and internment in World War II, the American Friends Service Committee testified today.

"The AFSC is on record for formal acknowledgement of wrongdoing by the American government and on record in support of monetary compensation to the victims," former Executive Secretary Louis W. Schneider told a special U.S. Commission hearing in Washington.

A total of 120,000 persons of Japanese descent were evacuated from mainland west coast areas and about 1,000 Aleut citizens from the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands of Alaska were relocated and detained.

"We feel it crucially important that those who were victimized during the war now articulate their experiences," Schneider declared. "We feel it very important that the American public be privy to the hurt, the anger and the resilience of the human spirit that ^{are} ~~is~~ part of those experiences. Perhaps the most painful aspect of the government internment has been the psychic effect. For nearly 40 years there has been a collective silence about the evacuation and the internment."

Schneider pointed out that a State Department investigator made it clear shortly before Pearl Harbor that there was no security threat by the Japanese community in this country. He said the relocation was racist on its face, subjecting Japanese-Americans to internment, an act not done to Americans of Italian and German ancestry.

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The AFSC worked some 39 years ago with the victims of the government's action.

Schneider spoke before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment, which is also holding hearings in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Anchorage, the Aleutian Islands, the Pribilof Islands, and in Chicago. Schneider was accompanied by Edmund Nakawatase, national program staff person of the AFSC Community Relations Division, who works on the Japanese American redress and other issues.

The AFSC was established in 1917 as a way of implementing Quaker beliefs in human equality, social justice and peace. It now has programs and projects throughout the United States and in several other nations.

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(Enclosure: Schneider testimony. Editors: For those not receiving a copy of the testimony, please write to Paul Brink, AFSC, 1501 Cherry Street, Phila., PA 19102).

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